



When the money talks

Scenario Description and Roadmap

Context of the story

Participants are employees at a struggling advertising startup that is on the brink of failure due to poor communication internally and externally. A wealthy and eccentric investor has heard of their goals and is willing to offer a long-term contract, but only if they can prove their ability to establish an efficient and effective digital communication plan. To do so, the participants must complete a series of communication-based challenges set up by the investor, who is playfully testing their entrepreneurship and cooperation skills.



Global explanation

The escape game consists of a series of challenges using a series of documents, each focusing on a different aspect of digital communication in entrepreneurship. Participants work together to tackle each challenge within a set time limit of 40 minutes, by the end of which the investor (Game Master) will retract their contract offer. The solution to each challenge leads to the next in a linear progression.

For the first step, the participants must solve a puzzle related to internal communication problems within a company by analysing emails and meeting notes to identify misunderstandings and poor coordination, which have led to delays. They first need to identify the chronological order of these emails to find a code which opens the box containing a document to fill in with the relevant information and communication issues identified throughout the documents.

The next step involves 3 sets of cards present in the same box, representing products, digital communication mediums and target audiences. Participants must match each category so that the most effective method is used to reach the target audience for each product. If they're able to justify it to the investor (Game Master), they move on to the final phase.

The participants then must draft a digital communication plan involving internal and external strategies to ensure they would effectively solve issues and reach their goals as an advertising start-up. If they're able to convince the investor by the end of the time limit, they succeed and their company is saved.



Roadmap

Phase A – Briefing and introduction

- The Game Master (acting as the investor) greets the participants and explains their situation and the stakes: the investor heard of their struggling digital advertisement start-up and their need to solve miscommunication issues. As an eccentric and wealthy entrepreneur, they believe that the start-up has potential, but the participants will have to earn their support.
- The investor proposes to sign a very lucrative long-term contract with their start-up if they can prove themselves worthy of that opportunity by solving the communication enigmas set around the room and by building an efficient communication plan: “Your goal is to solve the series of challenges I’ve set for you, which focus on improving communication. I’ll be watching closely. If you succeed in the next 40 minutes, a long-term contract is yours. If you don’t, then I’m afraid your company will go bankrupt... Good luck!”

Phase B – Internal communication breakdown

A series of 7 printed (numbered) emails and a Google Doc with meeting notes (Annex 1) are randomly placed around the room (in folders, drawers or boxes). Some of them are red herrings, while others contain key details. A locked box is placed nearby, with the drawings of a bird and a flame on top (example in Annex 1) and a 4-digit combination lock.



Step B.1 – Internal conflicts

- Participants must gather all the documents and correctly identify the main sequence of events for the project Phoenix based on the email clues, only focusing on the emails which communicate about the Phoenix project (to match the symbols on the box):

Email 4 comes first with the kick-off meeting, then email 1 which follows up on that meeting, then email 5 which highlights a delay, and finally email 7 which confirms deadlines.

- Using the code **4157** unlocks the box, which contains a document to fill in (Annex 2) and the clues for the next phase (Annex 3).

Step B.2 – Communication issues

- Participants need to fill in the planning sheet (Annex 2) with the adequate elements present across the emails and notes (Annex 1).
- They will notice that some information is missing or confusing, especially in the emails from the team lead: the project name, the starting date and the names of the members assigned specific tasks aren't specified in the emails – only in the team lead's notes (which prevents those who weren't present in the meeting from having clear information), the timing and request for availability are problematic as some team members weren't aware of the meeting or that they had to make time for that week until 1 hour before said meeting, and the team lead's tone is pressuring and intimidating, enhancing stressful situations, and doesn't foster a positive work environment or encourage teamwork, which leads to conflicts and delays.



- The Game Master should oversee this step and discuss it with participants to ensure that they have identified all the communication issues present in the emails before directing them to the next phase.
- Additionally, the way participants communicate with each other on the documents they have found and on how to solve this exercise should be highlighted or discussed in relation to the internal communication issues displayed in the fictional ER4DE Ad Inc. team.

Resources: Printed emails and notes (Annex 1) and planning sheet (Annex 2); box with 4-digit lock; whiteboard or paper pages and markers or pens.

Phase C – External communication goals

In the box are different sets of cards (Annex 3): one set represents 6 products to advertise, another set proposes 6 communication mediums and another shows 4 potential target audiences (by age range). They should be mixed in a random order.

Step C.1 – Matching the means to the needs

- Participants' task is to correctly associate each product with the most suitable communication medium and potential target audience to establish an advertisement plan. Each product can match with one or two communication mediums and can be promoted to different target audiences (which is why there are more target cards, many of which won't be used).
- The Game Master (or investor) will ask them to justify each of their choices: Why would this product be suited for this target audience? Why would that



communication medium be more effective than the others in reaching this target? What demographic within that age group would be the specific target?

Step C.2 – Justifying the communication plan

- To ensure that participants understand the way to establish an external communication plan, especially in the context of advertising a product and reaching the target audience, they will need to explain their choice:
 - ActiMove fitness app would be promoted on TikTok or Instagram to reach Gen Z and millennials who tend to be more active and health conscious.
 - DeMore accessories would be promoted on TikTok or Instagram to reach Gen Z, millennials and professionals who are interested in fashion.
 - HeroTech gaming gear would be promoted on YouTube to reach millennials who tend to be more invested in gaming.
 - EcoLife supplies would be promoted on Facebook to reach millennials and Gen X who tend to be more conscious of environmental issues or seek effective home supplies.
 - SecuBot home security would be promoted on Gmail or LinkedIn to reach millennials, professionals and Gen X who are likely to be homeowners.
 - Play2Learn smart toys would be promoted on Facebook or Gmail to reach professionals and Gen X who either work in education or have children.
- The participants may justify the choice of communication medium by specifying the type of communication: collaborations with content creators, sponsored posts, direct ads, choices based on case studies, customer feedback, etc.



Resources: Printed card sets (Annex 3); whiteboard or paper and markers or pens.

Phase D – Drafting a digital communication plan

Step D.1 – What have we learned

- The investor (Game Master) will ask participants to draft a coherent outline of a digital communication plan for their advertisement company that addresses both internal and external challenges based on what they have observed in the first 2 challenges.
- Using a whiteboard or paper, participants should discuss and establish an outline of their communication strategies and determine the means of communication within the team (emails, instant messaging such as Slack, online platforms such as Google Drive or Zoom) and with their potential targets depending on their clients' products and goals (identifying which medium to reach which target, using different types of advertisements – detailed in the Trainer's guide).

Step D.1 – Proving their worth

- Participants should complete and explain their digital communication plan, ensuring it is clear and efficient and trying to convince the investor (Game Master) that they'd adequately perform it if they were given a chance.
- The investor (Game Master) then evaluates the plan and discusses with participants on their strategies to ensure it covers all relevant aspects and addresses the issues uncovered in the previous challenges.



Phase E – Debrief and reflection

After the escape, the Game Master should organise a debrief session to help participants reflect on what they learned about digital communication, the importance of adequate internal exchange of information and their problem-solving strategies, along with the required elements of a digital communication plan in entrepreneurship, specifically advertising, to ensure that they grasped the reasoning behind each phase and acquired the expected skills and knowledge.

Resources: Whiteboard for summarising key points; optional feedback survey.



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